

Unitarian Universalist Small Group Ministry Network Website
SMALL GROUP MINISTRY Plan for Facilitators

Take Your Time

Main Line Unitarian Church, Devon, PA September 2004

Edited from the San Jose UU Church by Susan Hollister

Opening Words & Chalice Lighting: From Kalidasa #419

Look to this day!
For it is life, the very life of life.
In its brief course lie all the verities
And realities of your existence:
 The bliss of growth
 The glory of action,
 The splendor of beauty;
For yesterday is but a dream,
And tomorrow is only a vision;
But today, well-lived, makes every yesterday
A dream of happiness
And every tomorrow a vision of hope.
Look well, therefore, to this day.

Reflection/Personal Sharing/Prayer (approximately 30 minutes)

(The facilitator should briefly remind the group of confidentiality/anonymity, that this is not the time for cross conversation, etc.)

Focus Readings:

On January 1, 1972, the definition of a second was designated as the atomic second – 9,192,631,770 oscillations of the cesium atom – and Coordinated Universal Time was set by international agreement ... *the* time, abstract, universal, monotime. But. There is no such thing. Despite its seemingly ubiquitous global dominance (anyplace where Western capitalism – which has forever linked money to time – has made deep inroads), the ideology of Western time is just one of thousands upon thousands of other, different ideologies that are literally more natural than our synthetic time, that of plastic plants pretending to a perennial summer and year-round Astroturf trampling on real Springs' grass seedlings. In countless other cultures past and present, time can be embodied only in the natural world and in nature's processes, where it has true immediacy and radiance, where it is a sensual perception, not a notation.

From Jay Griffiths, "The Nature of Time" (*Body & Soul*, September/October 2002)

"An unhurried sense of time is in itself a form of wealth."

~ Bonnie Friedman, in *The New York Times*

"Time isn't precious at all, because it is an illusion. What you perceive as precious is not time but one point that is out of time: the Now. That is precious indeed. The more you

are focused on time – past and future – the more you miss the Now, the most precious thing there is.”

~ Eckhart Tolle, *The Power of Now*

“Time rushes by and yet time is frozen. Funny how we get so exact about time at the end of life and at its beginning. She dies at 6:08 or 3:46, we say, or the baby was born at 4:02. But in between we slosh through huge swatches of time—weeks, months, years, decades even.”

~ Helen Prejean

“Time is the most valuable thing a man can spend.” ~ Theophrastus

Focus Questions:

Time ... each of us has the same 24 hours of it in the day and the same 365 days of it in the year. But each of us perceives that time differently – and the way we perceive it can affect our lives in fundamental ways. These questions might help you uncover your own personal “philosophy” of time.

1. What metaphors describe how you feel about time? Do you think of time as a placid pool or a raging waterfall? Linear and sequential, or without beginning and end (a line or a circle)? A stern taskmaster or a friendly helper? A seamless whole or bits and pieces? In the natural world?
2. How does your perception of time affect your daily life?
3. Have you experienced “expanded time” (when a period seems much longer than it actually is according to the clock)? Have you experienced “compressed time” (when a period seems much shorter than it is by clock time)? Have you ever had a feeling of timelessness?
4. Which colors your life more: The future (anticipating, planning, worrying) or the past (remembering, obsessing, storytelling)? Have you ever lived in the past or the future more than in the now? What have been the consequences?
5. How has your vision of and perception of time changed, as you’ve grown older?

Checkout/Likes and Wishes

(This is the time for facilitators to ask participants what they liked about this meeting and what they might wish for future meetings. This is also the time for any discussion of logistics.)

Closing Words & Extinguishing Chalice: From Carl Sandburg

“Time is the coin of your life. It is the only coin you have, and only you can determine how it will be spent. Be careful lest you let other people spend it for you.”